AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

1. **(Previously Presented)** An image coding apparatus for coding image data corresponding to a target image to be coded based on image data corresponding to a predictive image which is similar to the target image, said apparatus comprising:

predictive image generation means for generating image data corresponding to partial predictive images which are similar to plural partial images constituting the target image based on image feature data indicating features of the plural partial images;

image composition means for compositing the plural partial predictive images based on the image data of the plural partial predictive images and auxiliary data indicating positions and sizes of the respective partial images in the target image so as to generate image data of the predictive image; and

entropy coding means for subjecting the image data of the target image to entropy coding utilizing a correlation in pixel values between the target image and the predictive image, and outputting entropy codes as coded image data of the target image;

wherein said image coding apparatus is operable to output the image feature data and the auxiliary data in addition to the entropy codes.

2. **(Previously Presented)** An image coding apparatus as defined in Claim 1, further comprising image feature extraction means for generating the image feature data indicating the features of the respective partial images constituting the target image, and the auxiliary data indicating the positions and sizes of the respective partial images in the target image based on the image data of the target image.

3. **(Previously Presented)** An image coding apparatus as defined in Claim 2 wherein said entropy coding means comprises:

first image blocking means for dividing the image data of the predictive image into image data corresponding to plural predictive blocks constituting the predictive image and each having a predetermined size, and outputting the image data of each predictive block;

second image blocking means for dividing the image data of the target image into image data corresponding to plural target blocks constituting the target image and each having a predetermined size, and outputting the image data of each target block; and

block predictive coding means for subjecting the image data of each target block to entropy coding based on a correlation in pixel values between each predictive block and each target block;

wherein said block predictive coding means performs entropy coding on the image data of the target block and outputs corresponding coded image data and a coding flag when a difference between the target block and the predictive block is equal to or larger than a predetermined reference value; and

wherein said block predictive coding means does not perform entropy coding on the target block and outputs a non-coding flag when the difference between the target block and the predictive block is smaller than the predetermined reference value.

4-49. (Cancelled)